DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 243 132 CS 208 261

AUTHOR Clark, Christopher M.; Florio-Ruane, Susan
TITLE The Written Literacy Forum: Combining Research and Practice. Research Series No. 138.
INSTITUTION Michigan State Univ., East Lansing. Inst. for Research on Teaching.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Jan 84
CONTRACT 400-81-0014
NOTE 33p.
AVAILABLE FROM Institute for Research on Teaching, College of Education, Michigan State University, 252 Erickson Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824 ($3.00).
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Conference Proceedings (021) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Attitudes; Classroom Environment; Classroom Research; Cooperation; Higher Education; *Inservice Teacher Education; Literacy; Models; *Research Utilization; Secondary Education; Student Needs; Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Effectiveness; *Teacher Role; Writing (Composition); Writing Improvement; *Writing Instruction; Writing Processes; *Writing Research
IDENTIFIERS *Theory Practice Relationship

ABSTRACT

Composed of teachers, researchers, and teacher educators, the Written Literacy Forum suggests a model for bringing research and practice together. During its first two years of operation, the forum (1) investigated the means of rendering research findings in a form meaningful to practitioners; (2) created three formats for sharing research findings--simulation games for graduate student-researchers, the small roundtable format for inservice meetings between practitioners and researchers, and group analysis of case studies; (3) noted that while teachers and preservice teachers sought the opinions of teacher members of the forum during inservice meetings, administrators and curriculum specialists tended to seek information from forum researchers; and (4) found from classroom observations that effective teachers alternate their attention and energies among three levels of sociocognitive environments for writing in the high school: the general social system of the classroom, the curriculum, and the needs of individual students. (Samples of teacher-made materials used during inservice activities are appended.) (MM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED243132

Research Series No. 138

THE WRITTEN LITERACY FORUM: COMBINING RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Christopher M. Clark
Susan Florio-Ruane

Published By

The Institute for Research on Teaching
252 Erickson Hall
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan 48824

January 1984

This work is sponsored in part by the Institute for Research on Teaching, College of Education, Michigan State University. The Institute for Research on Teaching is funded primarily by the Program for Teaching and Instruction of the National Institute of Education, United States Department of Education. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the position, policy, or endorsement of the National Institute of Education. (Contract No. 400-81-0014)

CS208361

Institute for Research on Teaching

The **Institute for Research on Teaching** was founded at Michigan State University in 1976 by the National Institute of Education. Following a nationwide competition in 1981, the NIE awarded a second contract to the IRT, extending work through 1984. Funding is also received from other agencies and foundations for individual research projects.

The IRT conducts major research projects aimed at improving classroom teaching, including studies of classroom management strategies, student socialization, the diagnosis and remediation of reading difficulties, and teacher education. IRT researchers are also examining the teaching of specific school subjects such as reading, writing, general mathematics, and science, and are seeking to understand how factors outside the classroom affect teacher decision making.

Researchers from such diverse disciplines as educational psychology, anthropology, sociology, and philosophy cooperate in conducting IRT research. They join forces with public school teachers, who work at the IRT as half-time collaborators in research, helping to design and plan studies, collect data, analyze and interpret results, and disseminate findings.

The IRT publishes research reports, occasional papers, conference proceedings, a newsletter for practitioners, and lists and catalogs of IRT publications. For more information, to receive a list or catalog, and/or to be placed on the IRT mailing list to receive the newsletter, please write to the IRT Editor, Institute for Research on Teaching, 252 Erickson Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1034.

Co-Directors: Jere E. Brophy and Andrew C. Porter

Associate Directors: Judith E. Lanier and Richard S. Prawat

Editorial Staff
Editor: Janet Eaton
Assistant Editor: Patricia Nischan

Abstract

The Written Literacy Forum illustrates a model of collaboration, relationships, and interdependence among researchers and teachers. It has heightened teachers' awareness of the complexity of the writing process and of multiple opportunities to foster good writing. It has stimulated discussion of the nature of writing across grade levels. And it has focused research questions on issues that are likely to yield findings of immediate practical value to teachers. This paper describes the first two years' activities of the Written Literacy Forum.

THE WRITTEN LITERACY FORUM: COMBINING RESEARCH AND PRACTICE[1]

Christopher M. Clark and Susan Florio-Ruane[2]

The Written Literacy Forum is a collaborative effort by teachers and researchers aimed at developing effective means of bringing research on the teaching of writing into practice. Founded in September 1981, the Forum has conducted inquiry into the relationship between written literacy research and practice through two kinds of activity: (1) Forum deliberations, in which the nine members (five teachers and four researchers) discussed and analyzed key issues in the teaching of writing, and (2) planning, delivering, and reflecting on inservice workshops on writing instruction. In both of these major activities we drew from the substantial data base (Clark and Florio, with Elmore, Martin, Maxwell, & Metheny, 1982) collected in the IRT Written Literacy Project (in which all initial Forum members were participants), from the research literature on writing instruction, and from the extensive practical experiences of the participating teachers and researchers themselves. By these means we sought to develop thoroughly grounded and practical ways of bringing the fruits of research on writing into action in the classroom.

Background of the Written Literacy Forum

Written literacy is an acknowledged and valued outcome of schooling in American society, yet it has been lamented that writing is the most neglected

---

[1]This paper appeared in Teacher Education Quarterly, 1983, 10(3).

[2]Christopher M. Clark and Susan Florio-Ruane coordinate the IRT's Written Literacy Forum. They coordinated the IRT's now-completed Written Literacy Project, from which the Forum developed. Clark is an associate professor in MSU's Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology, and Special Education. Florio-Ruane is an associate professor in the Department of Teacher Education.

expressive mode in both teaching and research. The social and cognitive complexities of writing make it a difficult activity to study. But writing instruction continues to be a thorny responsibility of teachers, and the economic and social futures of children rest in part on their mastery of some set of writing skills. For these reasons, it is fitting that teachers and researchers with diverse skills and interests invest energy and creativity in the study of writing in schools.

It is precisely because written literacy is important, complex, and not well understood that it is an appropriate topic for the deliberations of a forum such as that described here. Of the relatively little research done on writing, most has considered, by means of experimental and correlational studies, analytically isolated parts of the writing process. Many researchers on writing acknowledge the complexity of their task and the limitations of conventional research designs. For the study of writing instruction, researchers need a new approach to relating research and practice, an approach with power and flexibility proportional to the challenge.

By and large, the millions of dollars invested in research on teaching over the last 15 years have not dramatically affected the practice of teaching. In part, this is because accumulating research findings is a slow and deliberate business, and the demands of the classroom will not wait patiently for researchers to come up with precise answers to precise questions. Another part of the explanation is that much of research on teaching pursues answers to questions that are of little practical interest to teachers and teacher educators. The right answers to the wrong questions will not find their way into the classroom, regardless of the language used to report these findings or the power of the teacher training methods that accompany them.

But even when research on teaching is timely and addresses questions of real interest to practicing teachers, the problem of putting research into practice is not automatically solved. Because every classroom situation is unique, a list of prescriptions for teaching will miss the mark more often than not or be couched in such general terms as to constitute a set of mere slogans. Furthermore, teachers are thinking professionals and not mere technicians. They deserve and need to have a sense of ownership over what, why, and how they teach. Both the processes of inquiry and the findings of research on teaching must be subjected to careful deliberation by all interested parties in order to ground recommendations for the practice of teaching in the wisdom and experience of practitioners.

The Written Literacy Forum was created as one possible answer to the challenge of bringing research and practice together. In creating it, we attempted to modify the traditional culture of research that defines teachers as subjects, researchers as data analysts, and teacher educators as change agents. Each participant in the Written Literacy Forum takes on all of these roles and more. New social, methodological, and theoretical forms develop as we collectively reflect on the teaching and learning of writing in schools. To the extent that we meet the conditions of timeliness, relevance, and practice-grounded deliberation over research processes and results, the two worlds of research and practice begin to inform one another.

To modify the less than satisfactory status quo in ways that teachers, researchers, and teacher educators acquire and use knowledge about teaching and learning, new ways of working together are being attempted and documented. The Forum extends the conventional boundaries of teaching, research, and teacher education. As members of these three distinct educational groups come together in the Forum to raise and seek answers to questions about writing

instruction, they also seek a shared universe of discourse and a common language of inquiry. In the negotiation and understanding of the study of writing instruction, researchers and practitioners bring different strengths and interests. But, in the context of the Forum, trust and dialogue can arise, yielding not only increased knowledge about the process of writing instruction, but insight into the process of professional development as it is experienced by practitioners and researchers alike.

The First Year

A perusal of the minutes from the 1981-82 Forum meetings shows that much of our agenda was taken up with deliberating the group's goals and purposes. Underlying those deliberations was a collective commitment within the group to both support of the teaching of Forum members and service to the profession at large. Central to our deliberations were several questions concerning the process of bringing research into practice:

1. Of the many findings reported in the Written Literacy Project, which were of most salience and use to practitioners? To student teachers? To administrators? To researchers?

2. Which formats for sharing the research would be best suited to the content? The audience? The social setting of the inservice?

3. What is the nature of discourse among various social groups in the field of education, and how would the social identities of the various participants play themselves out in the inservice situation?

The following section of this report summarizes what we learned about answers to each of these questions as a consequence of sharing our work with other members of the educational community through varied and novel inservice formats and activities.

Inservice Content

The technical report of our original research and other publications of the Written Literacy Project (Clark & Florio et al., 1982) provided a substantial corpus of information from which the Forum selected in planning the inservices. This corpus already reflected judgments of the research team about what was learned in the study and what was important to report. However, when these reports were reexamined in dialogue with the teachers in the Forum, the group noted that a legitimate question for research was, "After you have completed a study, what does it take to render the findings in a form that is meaningful to practitioners?" Answering this question is both a last step in the research process and a first step in sharing what has been learned and planning new studies.

We discovered as we thought about this question that the practitioners in our group had identified a small number of key findings that they argued persuasively would be of interest and use to teachers. These key findings were linked to several themes that run through the reports of our research. They are (1) connections between home/community and classroom in writing instruction, (2) functions of and opportunities for writing in everyday classroom life, and (3) long-range planning and its role in writing instruction. Each of these three themes highlights an aspect of the realities of classroom life with which teachers have to contend. The research describes these classroom realities as they are managed by experienced teachers and draws implications that build upon life as it is in classrooms rather than offering utopian suggestions for the transformation of classroom teaching that are beyond the scope of what teachers can realistically accomplish. The sample teacher-made materials appended to this report illustrate how the Forum teachers worked from research findings to develop instructional materials for other teachers.

We learned in this process that the issue of audience is powerfully related to choices of what to report from a large research project such as ours. It is worthy of note that the researchers did not necessarily choose the same themes to highlight when preparing reports to scholarly audiences, nor were the materials prepared by the teachers of equivalent interest to audiences of teachers, student teachers, and administrators. At the very least, such a discovery threw questions of the relation between theory and practice into new light for the Forum. Theoreticians came to be viewed as practitioners, too, with their own practical concerns, special skills, and ways of speaking. And practitioners were no longer members of a vast, undifferentiated category of school people to us. Teachers, curriculum specialists, principals, teacher educators, and student teachers are different interest groups with different concerns, technical jargon, and spheres of responsibility. Not all research content is of use or interest to all of these audiences, and not all formats for sharing research are equally effective.

Inservice Format

To date, the Forum has worked with three formats for sharing research findings (see appendix). For sensitizing graduate student-researchers to the subtle but important process of negotiating entry into schools and classrooms, the Forum designed a simulation game. After the simulation was piloted with graduate students in the field-work research course sequence at MSU, students had an opportunity to evaluate the experience. The Forum members made subsequent revisions in the simulation with an eye toward proposing it as the central activity in an intensive training session on "Relations in the Field" to be presented in conjunction with a future annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association.

In addition to the simulation, which was highly successful in the graduate seminar setting where students are eager to experience the process of making entry in preparation for their own research, the Forum has experimented with the small roundtable format so successful at professional meetings. In its work with classroom teachers, curriculum specialists, and administrators, Forum members recognized that a format that made the most of the brief time busy professionals were able to spare and that engaged them as colleagues able to make choices about their professional development might deliver the in-service meetings from their usual separation of "experts" from "clients." Thus, we developed the format of four brief, simultaneous, teacher-led round-tables, each treating an important theme in our research. Participants were free to move from table to table at their leisure in one case and were routed from brief presentation to brief presentation in several others. In both versions, the teacher presenters and their research colleagues were challenged to be succinct and pertinent in their remarks and were available for more individualized follow-up with interested participants later. The format was also sensitive to the inservice as a social event in many school districts. The flow of people from place to place left time for enjoying a cup of coffee en-route or for sitting with one's colleagues from another building. Each table was a place to be introduced to a topic of interest and to receive written handout material as well. This format, to date, has been well-received by the teachers and student teachers who have participated in our inservices.

A third and extremely promising format for sharing the findings of research is the group analysis of case studies. In a recent paper (Florio & Clark, 1983) we developed an argument for the use of well-crafted case studies deriving from research on teaching as an important adjunct to the field experience for undergraduates preparing to become teachers. During the 1982-83

academic year, our case studies have been part of the curriculum in a number of courses for education students at MSU's College of Education. These courses include the introductory field experience in teaching, educational psychology, and language arts methods. We have been learning in the Forum that the case study affords students of teaching the opportunity to examine real-life teaching situations repeatedly and critically.

Discourse

Throughout our deliberations in the past year we have come time and again to the insight that research and teacher education are sociolinguistic processes. We have sometimes arrived at this insight by examination of the minutes and transcripts of our own meetings, where we find early, halting attempts to talk across disciplinary lines and typical role expectations that accompany the statuses of "researcher" and "collaborating teacher." We have also found the sociolinguistic nature of the process of bringing research into practice to be apparent in our efforts to share our work with diverse audiences. When we worked with graduate students in educational research, the teacher members of the Forum were received as expert informants on the process of negotiating entry. They easily led our graduate students in lively simulations and explorations of the complicated and sensitive problems of relations between researchers and teachers in the field. Similarly, when the teachers shared insights on the teaching of writing with undergraduate education majors, their experiences were received with great interest and enthusiasm by the future teachers. The Forum teachers had an apparent ligitimacy that none of the researchers enjoyed in working with these students.

The Forum teachers have been perhaps most effective when sharing their insights from the research with other teachers. Although researchers are

always present during these meetings, their insights and opinions are rarely sought. Instead, the Forum teachers speak authoritatively about both the experience of participating in research and about the lessons learned about writing instruction. The Forum teachers and their audience share common experiences, and the teachers readily accept the materials offered them.

In contrast, when we have worked with curriculum specialists and administrators, we find a greater tendency for the participants to seek confirmation or an authoritative answer about some issue in writing instruction not from the teachers, but from the researchers. We find the administrators and specialists speaking the language of research comfortably. They appear to take the insights of the teachers as interesting, but turn to the researchers for the legitimated knowledge they came to the inservice to gain.

While what has been reported here are admittedly first impressions based on our initial inservice work, they prompt us to ask research questions about the sociolinguistic division of labor within the community of education and the legitimacy of various bodies of knowledge about teaching. It has been argued that such a division exists and is reified by means of the language and social expectations participants from different groups carry into face-to-face contact (Florio, 1983).

The Second Year

Taking our initial experiences both within the Forum and in our contacts with diverse audiences as data for further investigation, the Forum moved into its second year of operation (1982-83) with a three-part agenda:

1. continuing dissemination of our research both on written literacy and on the process of bringing research into practice,
2. adding to our research and data set by conducting a study of written literacy in secondary school, and

3. broadening the membership of the Forum to include teachers not previously involved in writing research.

In retrospect, the second year of Forum activities can be characterized as a time of expansion and change of membership, research activities, and scope of operations. In its second year, the Forum expanded its membership to include teachers not previously involved in research by inviting two teachers of writing at the high school level to join. These invitations reflected the group's concern for sharing the Forum experience with other teachers in the district under study, opening up the possibility of research on high school writing, and encouraging dialogue about problems of writing instruction across all of the grade levels in the district.

Beginning in September 1982, IRT researchers, joined by a new graduate intern, continued to meet with one elementary teacher and two middle school teachers from the original Forum. In addition, two high school teachers joined the group. One teacher is primarily responsible for instruction in ninth-grade English, but teaches creative and expository writing to upperclassmen as well. A photographer with a local and national reputation, he is particularly interested in the motivational aspects of writing instruction. The second new Forum member is the director of the high school Writing Lab. This lab serves the needs of all ninth graders. As its creator and proprietor, this teacher has the opportunity to meet and work with all ninth graders and with their teachers. The lab employs individually guided instruction and word processors to enable students to practice such writing skills as grammar, punctuation, and parts of speech. The teacher who runs the lab is also a writer who has published her own poetry.

Themes of Forum Discussions

During the fall and winter, discussions at the Forum's monthly meetings centered on two themes:

1. instructional and curricular issues of concern cutting across grade levels in the district (e.g., assessment of student writing, ways to expand and extend the kinds and purposes of student writing at all levels, potential applications of computers in writing instruction); and

2. the influence of factors external to the classroom on the writing curriculum (e.g., district-level decisions about grading policies, testing, materials; parental values, heterogeneity of the student population served in the district, types and frequency of inservice activities in writing).

During these discussions, it quickly became apparent that the addition of new Forum members not only changed the nature of our meetings, but also broadened the agenda to include exploration of concerns at the district and community level, as well as the particular, specific concerns of day-to-day life in the classroom. These discussions helped to shape the emerging research agenda of the Written Literacy Forum and introduced the concept of "nested environments for writing" (the classroom within the school within the district, etc.) that exist in schools and classrooms. These environments help to shape both teacher planning and opportunities to write in school. Though they have been implicit in our previous research, these environments have been important in both our Forum discussions and our research this year.

Forum Research: Environments For Writing in the High School

From September 1982 through January 1983, Forum researchers undertook a study of writing in the ninth-grade classrooms of the two new Forum members. Expanding written literacy research for the first time into the high school, this study was intended to serve as a pilot both to describe the dynamics of

the important transitional ninth-grade year in the writing lives of students, and to learn more about how to study writing instruction in high school settings.

Preliminary Findings

Our pilot research during fall term included classroom participant observation, teachers keeping journals, and interviews of teachers and students. Data were analyzed in weekly staff meetings, where emerging patterns were identified, guiding questions refined, working hypotheses generated and tested, and data collection decisions modified in process. Since data gathering ended, data analysis has continued, resulting in several research reports in process and the development of a proposal for additional research on high school writing.

Data analysis in our pilot research suggests that teachers of high school English must plan and instruct in the context of many, often competing, goals and values for literacy education. The high school is the last contact with formal, public education for many students. How long these students stay, and what they learn there, is of interest to many people. The diverse interests that are at stake in high school curriculum and instruction often play themselves out as a myriad of contextual factors, including the time, material, and curricular mandates with which the teacher must work. In addition, the teacher must work with diverse students nearing adulthood whose past experiences and future life plans differ with respect to the role that writing plays within them. How these forces and factors are mediated in teacher planning and managed in the everyday classroom lives of teachers and students is the focus of our current research on high school writing and is echoed in our deliberations and workshop planning with Forum teachers.

Teachers Attend to Three Environmental Levels of Writing

Our research to date suggests that effective teachers alternate their attention and energies among three levels of sociocognitive environments for writing in high school. At the most general level, the teachers we observed appear to attend to establishing the social system of the classroom with its accompanying expectations, norms, rules, and routines for doing the business of schooling in general and of school writing in particular. Early in the school year, we observed especially heavy attention given by the teachers to this most general level of the environment for writing.

The second level of the environment for writing is the curriculum itself. Here we observed teachers focusing on particular units or activities that we have called in our previous research "occasions for writing" and on the orchestration of these occasions for writing, the relationships among them, and the practical operational details within each occasion for writing (Florio, 1982).

There is a third level of the environment for writing which we are finding teachers must attend to if writing instruction is to be reasonably successful for all students. This third level is that of the individual student. The teacher's task is to interest, motivate, and assist individual students (particularly those for whom written expression is difficult) so that they will participate in and make sense of each opportunity to develop written literacy. When attending to this third level of the environment for writing, the teacher is drawing heavily on his or her knowledge of the background, interests, and learning style of individual students. In the process, some of the details of the occasion for writing may be modified so that, in effect, a somewhat different writing curriculum is experienced by each pupil. From the student's point of view, each writing task or occasion may be interpreted in

terms of his or her unique history and current situation. So it follows that both the teacher and individual students participate and negotiate to establish and maintain this third level of environment for writing. It is this level that we hope to investigate more thoroughly in our future research and in the interview and dialogue-journal studies now being undertaken.

In our pilot research, we are finding that all three of these levels of environments for writing are important because they are each profoundly connected to writing as communication between teachers and students. Teachers and students make meaning together in both oral and written language. Thus, writing is not only a curricular content but a curricular process. Writing, as such a process, may or may not be genuinely meaningful to the students who are asked to do it. Whether or not school writing is meaningful to students matters not only in terms of their motivation and interest, but in the range of writing skills they ultimately have an opportunity to acquire and practice.

Viewed in this light, the task demands in an environment for writing can be thought of as rights and duties of the composer negotiated differently between teachers and students for different purposes. Who finds the topic? Who selects the genre? Who plans the paper's format? Whose purpose is served by the writing? How do teachers mediate the many forces from within and outside the classroom that influence writing instruction in school to craft environments in which students have a share in the rights and obligations of authorship? These are the kinds of questions that our pilot research generated and that form the essence of our Forum deliberations.

Future Plans and Dissemination

Having collected the data and generated initial working hypotheses about patterns within them, all the Forum members will have an opportunity to

examine them and to discuss the concept of environments for writing in greater depth. It is our hope that this continued and collaborative reduction and analysis of data will inform the writing of several papers for both researchers and practitioners. Two that are planned include one on the roles of teacher and student in the composing process, focusing on the teacher as respondent to the student writer. A second paper will be a synthesis of research on writing instruction intended for practitioners that will review not only case studies of writing instruction, but psychological studies of the composing process and applications of new technology to writing instruction. We hope this synthesis of research for teachers will inform their curricular decision making.

A related area that holds promise for future Forum research into practice is that of the problems and promises of computer technology in writing instruction. As was mentioned earlier, the Writing Lab studied in Forum research and taught by one of our members employs microcomputers as word processors. In our past high school observations, we documented students' writing at the keyboard and contrasted it to students' writing in more traditional settings. Our future high school observations will allow us to continue this. This kind of close documentation of the computer in use in classrooms and of the way it is related to student writing and teacher curricular decision making may be of value to both researchers and practitioners interested in its applications to writing instruction.

Currently, several Forum members are working on the issue of using computers in writing instruction in various ways. The Writing Lab teacher is conducting workshops for other teachers on the use of computers in writing instruction. In addition, several other Forum teachers now have computers in their rooms, and Christopher Clark has worked with them and their colleagues

as a consultant on computer use. Susan Florio-Ruane is a member of the advisory board for an NIE-sponsored project by Bolt, Baranek, and Newman, Inc. to develop software for use in writing instruction in elementary classrooms. Clearly, this is an area of interest to the Forum and one that may grow in importance in the coming months.

Conclusion

The first two years of operation of the Written Literacy Forum constitute a modest but important step toward bringing research and practice together. Figure 1 is a useful heuristic both for planning and for describing the Forum's current work. It lists theoretical, conceptual/heuristic, and practical/applied contributions that our activities have made and can continue to make in the areas of curriculum development, instructional improvement, and both pre- and inservice teacher education. In addition, when the figure is taken as a whole, it displays how, in a single research enterprise, it is possible to produce descriptions of the relationships among curriculum, instruction, and teacher preparation and professional development. The Forum has the potential to demonstrate and illustrate the relationships and interdependence among teachers' theoretical knowledge, their conceptual understandings, and their practical behavior.

The effort to merge the perspectives of teachers and researchers has demanded a considerable amount of time and energy, especially from Forum teachers. The costs and benefits of this kind of collaboration are discussed in a recent paper by Florio (1983). Through inservice workshops and conference presentations, Forum members have had direct contact with hundreds of teachers, prospective teachers, school administrators, and researchers. There is no simple way to measure or summarize the effects of these influences, but it

	Curriculum	Instruction	Research Into Practice	Professional Development
Theoretical	Description of how the process of teacher-led curriculum development works.	Insights into the practical constraints that influence curriculum as it is put into action.	Model of how the deliberative process between teachers and researchers works.	Rationale for learning to teach by case-study analysis.
Conceptual/ Heuristic	Definition and exemplification of a meaningful instructional unit--occasion for writing.	Case studies of how curricular ideas are brought into action.	Case studies of the Written Literacy Forum in action.	Support groups and their role in professional development in writing instruction.
Practical/ Applied	Description of a useful process by which teachers might develop their own curriculum.	Particular good ideas that work and are worthy of imitation presented in context.	Particular inservice designs for teacher training.	Teaching with case studies.

Figure 1. Areas of current and future efforts of the IRT Written Literacy Forum.

is reasonable to believe that our efforts have at least heightened teachers' awareness of the complexity of written literacy acquisition and of the many opportunities that the school year presents to the alert teacher to foster good writing. Within the school district in which the forum has been meeting, a dialogue has sprung up about the nature of writing, the curriculum, and the process of writing instruction across the grade levels. This dialogue process could serve as one model of professional communication for other teachers and districts and in other subject matter domains. And, finally, the Forum experience has served to focus our research questions on topics and issues that, from the perspectives of experienced teachers, are most likely to yield findings of immediate practical value. While we have much to learn about how to combine the theoretical and the practical in education to the benefit of both, the IRT Written Literacy Forum has made a promising start.

References

Clark, C. M., & Florio, S., with Elmore, J. L., Martin, J., Maxwell, R. J., & Metheny, W. (1981). Understanding writing in school: A descriptive study of writing and its instruction in two classrooms (Final Report of the Written Literacy Study, NIE Grant No. 90840). East Lansing, MI: Institute for Research on Teaching, Michigan State University. (Also published as IRT Research Series No. 104, 1982).

Florio, S. (1982, December). Written discourse in the classroom. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Washington, D.C.

Florio, S. (1983, April). The Written Literacy Forum: An analysis of teacher/researcher collaboration. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Canada.

Florio, S., & Clark, C. M. (1983, February). A phenomenological approach to the "field" in field-based teacher education. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education, Detroit, MI.

APPENDIX

Teacher-Developed Materials Used During Inservice Activities

Simulation Game for Researchers on Gaining Entry

Rules of Simulation Games

Envelope I
Time Allowed: 20 minutes
Special Instructions: Each member is to take one of the white envelopes and follow the individual instructions contained in it.
Task: Researcher presents proposed study and group discusses it.
DO NOT LET ANYONE ELSE SEE YOUR INSTRUCTIONS!
(After 20 minutes, go on to the next envelope.)

Envelope II
Time Allowed: 10 minutes
Task: Group members reach consensus on whether or not to cooperate with the study.
(After 10 minutes, go on to the next envelope.)

Envelope III
Time Allowed: 20 minutes (15 minutes for Tasks A & B; 5 minutes for Task C)
Task A: Choose a recorder for your group who will take notes for your discussion.
Task B: Discuss the first two phases of the simulation game. Sample discussion questions:
1. Who were the different characters in the simulation?
2. How did the people in the simulation view research?
   - What is at stake for them?
   - What is to be gained?
3. What strategies did people in the simulation use to accomplish their goals?
   - What worked?
   - What problems were encountered?
   - Were these the only strategies that could have been used?
4. Could the simulated situation have really happened? Why? Why not?

Task C: Generate a list of the issues involved in gaining entry based on your group's experience. (This should be recorded on experience paper.)

Sample of Roles to be Played

Making Entry—Principals Meeting

Role: Earnest
Position: Researcher
You are to present your proposed study to an administrative meeting of district principals. Generally describe your study and be prepared to answer questions.

Role: Reluctant
Position: Principal
You have admitted researchers to your school one time before. They took up much of the staff's time and energy but did not share what they learned. You do not want this situation to be repeated.

Role: Supportive
Position: Principal
You are a curriculum leader supportive of change and innovation.

Role: Intervening
Position: Principal
You are concerned about how basic skills of writing are taught. You want a special report on this study from researchers.

Role: Protective
Position: Principal
You are an advocate of children's rights. Researcher(s) may have difficulty convincing you that the students' rights will be protected.

Role: Imposing/Intervening
Position: Principal
You have the responsibility of submitting teacher evaluations to the superintendent. You want the researcher(s) to do some of the work for you.

Role: Defensive
Position: Principal
You feel threatened because you have recently received adverse publicity about your school. You are anxious that researcher(s) make a commitment to present the findings publicly in a positive light to the school board and the community.

Promoting Parental Involvement in Writing at Home

During 1979-81 a naturalistic study of schooling and the acquisition of written literacy was conducted in two classrooms, a combined second and third grade and a sixth grade, by members of a research team from the Institute for Research on Teaching at Michigan State University. The first 10 months of the study consisted of extensive participant observation, interviewing, teacher journal keeping, sampling of student writing, and videotaping of occasions for writing in these two classrooms. The four teachers involved in the study (two focal teachers and their teammates) were active throughout the project as research collaborators who helped to shape the inquiry and give direction to the data interpretations.

Through the course of the study, it became evident that writing and its instruction were meaningfully organized not into discrete units such as lessons, but into broader units of related activities that integrated a range of skills and served broad social and academic functions. Literacy resides not entirely in the production of documents, but also in a complex of social roles, expressive purposes, and resources for writing. These broader units were labeled "occasions for writing." These occasions have four functions:

1. writing to participate in community,
2. writing to know oneself and others,
3. writing to occupy free time, and
4. writing to demonstrate academic competence.

These functions allow parents to become actively involved in the process of developing their children's writing ability and competency in skill areas --the acquisition of written literacy. Writing does not exist as a self-contained subject area limited by the school curriculum and the classroom

teacher. To help families become actively involved in writing, the following letter, based on the four functions of writing, was developed. In its present form the letter can be sent home to families at the end of the school year as an idea list for the summer. With modification of the introductory and closing paragraphs, it becomes a useful tool at open houses, conference times, and Parent-Teacher Association meetings. Use your imagination to adapt it to your needs.

Jo Ann Burak-Dohanich, Formerly of Donley Elementary School

Dear Family,

Parents often ask what they can do to help their children over the summer vacation. Writing is one area that you can concentrate on to help your child improve in all skill areas.

You can help your child to become a better writer by providing occasions for meaningful writing practice. Someone once said, "To learn to write, you have to write (and write and write)." This is perhaps the most important thing for your child to do to become a better writer. People write best when they have something to communicate and when they see writing as the best way to do that communicating. Here are some suggestions to start you thinking:

1. Have your child do writing as part of regular household responsibilities: Make shopping lists, keep track of chore assignments, plan a party or trip (how many people will we invite, what kind of food will we need, how much will it cost?).

2. Plan a family writing project: Keep a family journal or a log of a family trip (encourage both writing and drawing in these activities).

3. Encourage your child to write to relatives and friends who may be away from home: Calling may be the "next best thing to being there," but writing will increase your child's reading and writing skills, plus it's always fun to get a reply. (It helps to choose people you know will write back.)

4. Be a good example for your child: Show him or her that writing is a good way to communicate. Write to your child now and then--praising him/her for a job completed, reminding him/her of a special occasion. Write letters or cards to family and/or friends, write letters to the local papers, write complaints (or compliments) about products and services in letters. Make an occasion of both writing the letter and sharing the reply with your child.

5. Encourage diary keeping: To do this you'll need to respect the privacy of the diary and be open to those occasions when your child wants to share an entry with you. Why not keep a diary of your own following the same rules?

6. Read and discuss the writing your child brings home to show you: Don't just look over graded papers your child brings home from school, but all types including those written for fun or projects completed at Sunday School or at Scouts.

Remember basic skills develop with writing. Writing is practiced most in situations where it is valued and useful, television and telephones notwithstanding. So write away this summer and right away it will be September.

Enjoy your summer.

Sincerely,

Using Unexpected Occasions for Writing

Writing in school is far more varied and complex than we dreamed when we began our study. Our classroom observations, talks with teachers and students, occasional videotaped lessons, and review of students' written work tell us that school writing has the following features:

1. Writing takes place all during the school day—in language or communication arts, reading, science, social studies, math, and free time.

    a. Some classroom activities are intended specifically to teach about writing (spelling, punctuation, sentence and paragraph structure, writing style).

    b. In other activities, writing is used to accomplish another kind of learning. Some examples of this kind are the recording of observations in science booklets, social studies descriptions of life in other cultures, and filling in worksheets for reading or math skill practice.

2. Writing varies in such things as length, content, and complexity depending on the school activity within which it takes place.

3. Special occasions and events—both classroom and school-wide—often provide fruitful opportunities for student writing. Plays, field trips, assemblies and special projects happen throughout the year and are the occasions for much student learning.

    a. Writing happens all the time.

    b. Whenever possible, writing should be meaningful—relevant to children's experiences.

4. The teacher plays a very special role in writing instruction.

    a. The teacher not only drills and monitors the progress of the student in basic skill learning, but also organizes the school day with many opportunities to practice those skills meaningfully in written expression.

    b. He or she provides modeling appropriate to students' age and maturity.

    c. The teacher should never require pupils to do what he or she would not be willing to do.

Writing Happens all the Time!

How aware are you of these happenings?

1. Sending letters and cards to a sick friend or classmate.

2. Writing thank you notes.

3. Acknowledging major accomplishments of students (e.g. congratulatory note for placing in the Pinewood Derby).

4. Setting a story to a play.

5. Describing the mood of a day.

6. Writing the main idea of a film, TV show, or radio program.

7. After listening to a concert, listing the titles of any three songs.

8. Having students sequence positive or negative behavior in a letter to parents.

9. Recording problems or positive situations in the general school environment.

10. Allowing children to critique each other's written work using a compliment sandwich--two positive sentences about the work and a negative one sandwiched in between.

11. Recording special events that happen during a day or week on chart paper or in diaries.

12. Searching for the mechanics of writing in the media.

13. Writing letters to chambers of commerce, tourist agencies, governmental agencies to obtain information.

14. Responding to contests in newspapers and magazines.

Brainstorm for More Unexpected Occasions for Writing

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Daisy Thomas,
Donley Elementary School

How to Use Parent-Helpers in the Evaluation of Writing

If writing is to be valued by students, it is imperative for them to know that what they write will be read.

Frequently, teachers do not encourage as much writing in their classes as they feel they should simply because they know they will not be able to do an adequate evaluation of a large number of papers. These teachers sense that to meet their students' needs they must write some positive comments, make some corrections, and/or give suggestions for improvement. Using parent-helpers in the evaluation process can relieve the teacher of some pressure and, at the same time, give the student another viewpoint of his/her writing.

It is our purpose to assist teachers by suggesting ideas on how to select effective parent-helpers, how to communicate teacher expectations to the helpers, and how to keep the system working.

1. How to select a parent-helper
    a. Obvious interest.
    b. Positive attitudes.
    c. Ability to follow directions.
    d. Realization of importance of promptness.
    e. Awareness of general rules for good writing
    (1) spelling (2) grammar (3) clarity (4) punctuation (5) form.
2. How to communicate your expectations to parent-helpers
    a. One-on-one conferences.
    b. Models: (1) examples of symbols used for corrections, (2) examples of students' papers with corrections, (3) examples of positive comments to be used on students' papers.
3. How to keep the system working
    a. Develop a workable delivery and return system.
    b. Have each parent evaluate one group of students' papers throughout the year.

c. Notify parent-helpers of schedule changes (i.e., no assignment because of a holiday, professional development days, etc.).

d. Recognize helpers periodically through (1) notes (2) phone calls.

Appeals at open houses, requests in school/room newsletters, and utilization of parent volunteer coordinators are some ways to solicit parent-helpers. Benefits of using parents in the evaluation of students' writings include more positive attitudes toward writing assignments by teachers and improved public relations.

Wayne Hastings, Hannah Middle School

Marilyn Peterson, Donley Elementary School